Claims

[c1]   A data storage medium comprising means for subsequent alteration by an external influence in a manner detectable by a designated data rendering system, said alteration permanently corrupting at least part of the stored data with the purpose of enforcing at least one restrictive covenant of the data usage agreement.

[c2]   The data storage medium according to claim 1 wherein said medium is an optically readable medium.

[c3]   The data storage medium according to claim 1 wherein at least part of the encoded data is data selected from a plurality comprising audio data, video data, video game, computer software, and graphical data.

[c4]   The data storage medium according to claim 1 wherein said means for medium alteration comprise at least one structural weakness to assure irreversibility of said alteration.

[c5]   The data storage medium according to claim 1 wherein said external influence is a mechanical force.

[c6]   The data storage medium according to claim 1 wherein

said alteration is conducted by displacing material composing said medium.

[c7] The data storage medium according to claim 1 wherein said alteration is conducted by adding material to said medium.

[c8] The data storage medium according to claim 1 wherein access to at least some of the encoded data is geometrically hindered prior to said medium alteration.

[c9] The data storage medium according to claim 1 wherein said alteration is conducted by changing at least one physical property of at least some of the material composing said medium.

[c10] The data storage medium according to claim 1 wherein said alteration is conducted by an end user.

[c11] The data storage medium according to claim 1 wherein said alteration is conducted by an end user's data rendering system.

[c12] An end user system for rendering content delivered on a removable data storage medium enabled for subsequent alteration by an external influence in a manner detectable by said system, said alteration permanently corrupting at least part of the content access data, said sys-

tem storing at least part of the content access data and restricting access to at least part of the content prior to said medium alteration with the purpose of enforcing at least one restrictive covenant of the content usage agreement, the system comprising:

a reader for reading the content of said medium;

a memory cell for storing access data designated to be permanently corrupted as a result of said medium alteration;

an alteration detector for determining an alteration status of said medium;

a logic unit programmed to deny access to at least part of said content upon detecting at least one event out of a plurality of events comprising: an alteration of said medium has not been confirmed by said alteration detector, content access data is not present in said memory cell, at least one restrictive covenant of said content usage agreement is not satisfied.

[c13] The end user system according to claim 12 further comprising a message display for delivering messages to end user.

[c14] The end user system according to claim 12 further comprising means for compatibility with respect to the types of data storage media not requiring alteration but otherwise substantially analogous to the data storage medium

requiring subsequent alteration permanently corrupting at least part of the stored data by an external influence in a manner detectable by said system.

[c15] The end user system according to claim 12 wherein access to at least some of the content is geometrically hindered prior to medium alteration.

[c16] The end user system according to claim 12 wherein at least part of said content is encrypted, and the access data designated to be corrupted as a result of said medium alteration comprises anencryption key essential for decrypting said content.

[c17] The end user system according to claim 12 wherein said logic unit is further programmed to retrieve at least one restrictive covenant of the content usage agreement from the data storage medium containing said content.

[c18] The end user system according to claim 12 wherein said logic unit is further programmed to conduct a comparative test of at least one restrictive covenant of said content usage agreement against at least one parameter functionally dependent on said content's prior usage history.

[c19] The end user system according to claim 12 wherein said logic unit is further programmed to conduct a compara-

tive test of at least one restrictive covenant of said content's usage agreement against at least one time dependent parameter.

[c20]   The end user system according to claim 12 wherein said memory cell is a removable modular component.

[c21]   The end user system according to claim 12, wherein said alteration detector comprises:
a light source;
an optical detector mounted in the vicinity of said light source and responsive to light emitted by said light source.

[c22]   The end user system according to claim 12, wherein said alteration detector comprises:
an electric power supply;
a contact circuit breaker electrically connected to said power supply, the electrical conductivity of said circuit breaker being dependent on the existence of mechanical contact with said data storage medium;
an alteration signal generator electrically connected to said power supply and said contact circuit breaker generating signal dependent on the electrical voltage applied to said signal generator.

[c23]   The end user system according to claim 12 wherein said

data reader is a reader for optically readable media.

[c24] The end user system according to claim 12 wherein said external influence is a mechanical force.

[c25] The end user system according to claim 12 further comprising a parameter generator generating at least one parameter to be tested against at least one restrictive covenant of the content usage agreement .

[c26] The end user system according to claim 25 wherein said parameter generator comprises a device generating a time-dependent signal.

[c27] The end user system according to claim 25 wherein said parameter generator comprises a device generating a signal uniquely identifying said system.

[c28] A method to distribute content stored on a removable data storage medium enabled for subsequent alteration by an external influence in a manner detectable by end user's data rendering system, said alteration permanently corrupting at least part of the content access data with the purpose of enforcing at least one restrictive covenant of the content usage agreement, said method comprising the steps of:
recording content on said medium;
recording access data on said medium;

delivering said medium to end user's data rendering system, said system restricting access to at least part of the content prior to said medium alteration;

storing at least part of the access data by said system;

altering said medium to render at least part of the access data to be unreadable;

conducting an alteration test of said medium;

retrieving at least part of the content from said medium using the access data stored by said system.

[c29] The method to deliver content according to claim 28 wherein at least part of said content is encrypted, and the access data designated to be corrupted as a result of said medium alteration comprises anencryption key essential for decrypting said content.

[c30] The method to deliver content according to claim 28 wherein at least part of the content is data selected from a plurality comprising audio data, video data, video game, computer software, and graphical data.

[c31] The method to deliver content according to claim 28 wherein said medium is an optically readable medium.

[c32] The method to deliver content according to claim 28 wherein said external influence is a mechanical force.

[c33] The method to deliver content according to claim 28

wherein said altering is conducted by end user.

[c34] The method to deliver content according to claim 28 wherein said altering is conducted by end user's data rendering system.

[c35] The method to deliver content according to claim 28 further comprising the steps of:
recording usage history for said content;
conducting a comparison test of said usage history against at least one restrictive covenant of the content usage agreement.

[c36] The method to deliver content according to claim 28 further comprising the step of conducting a comparative test of at least one restrictive covenant of the content usage agreement against at least one parameter generated by said data rendering system.

[c37] The method to deliver content according to claim 36 further comprising the step of retrieving at least one restrictive covenant of the content usage agreement from the data storage medium containing said content.

[c38] The method to deliver content according to claim 36 wherein at least one said parameter is time dependent parameter.

[c39] An optically readable data storage medium comprising at least one structural weakness for irreversible alteration by an external mechanical force in a manner detectable by a designated data rendering system, said alteration permanently corrupting at least part of the stored data with the purpose of enforcing the data usage agreement.

[c40] An end user system for rendering content delivered on an optically readable data storage medium enabled for subsequent alteration by a mechanical force in a manner detectable by said system, said alteration corrupting at least part of the content access data, said system storing at least part of the content access data and restricting access to at least part of said content prior to said medium alteration with the purpose of enforcing the content usage agreement, the system comprising:
a reader for reading the content of said medium;
a memory cell for storing part of the access data designated to be corrupted as a result of said medium alteration.

[c41] The end user system according to claim 40 further comprising an alteration detector for determining an alteration status of said medium.

[c42] The end user system according to claim 41 further comprising a logic unit programmed to deny access to at

least part of said content upon detecting at least one event out of a plurality of events comprising: an alteration of said medium has not been confirmed by said alteration detector, data corrupted as a result of said medium alteration is not present in said memory cell.